

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk
Fort Polk, Louisiana 71459-6650

CIVILIAN PERSONNEL
BULLETIN NO. 15-01

26 April 2001

NOTICE OF U.S. ARMY MEDICAL ACTIVITY (MEDDAC) REDUCTION IN FORCE

1. The purpose of this bulletin is to notify all MEDDAC/DENTAC/VETCOM employees of an impending reduction in force (RIF). This RIF is necessary due to the contracting out of the MEDDAC Ambulance Service. All of the positions consisting of grades GS-08, GS-07 and GS-06 in the Ambulance Section, Emergency Medicine, Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital are scheduled for abolishment.

2. It is projected that RIF notices will be issued 8 June 2001, with an effective date of 11 August 2001. RIF notices cannot be issued until receipt of HQDA clearance to proceed with the conversion and issuance of notice to proceed or award of unconditioned contract has been accomplished by the contracting officer. Therefore, the projected dates are subject to change to later dates.

3. Employees are encouraged to review the contents of Civilian Personnel Bulletin 5-01, dated 5 February 2001, Informational Bulletin for MEDCOM Employees regarding review of Official Personnel Records and updates to your records. The official cutoff date for receipt of updates in the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) for this projected RIF is close of business on 10 May 2001.

4. It is important to understand the RIF processes that occur within the guidelines of RIF regulations derived from the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944 and presently codified in Sections 3501-3503 of Title 5, United States Code. The law provides that RIF regulations must take into account four factors in releasing employees: Tenure; veterans' preference; length of service; and performance ratings. RIF procedures are rather complicated, and it is helpful to have as much information as possible concerning why a RIF is happening and how the process works. This understanding provides you with useful information even if the RIF does not affect you. Let's begin by looking at the following:

a. **COMPETITIVE AREA:** Before RIF begins, the competitive areas are identified and these are the boundaries within which employees compete

for assignment under reduction in force. Employees within a competitive area compete only with each other; they do not bump, retreat, or otherwise compete with employees in another competitive area. Competitive areas are also controlled by the commuting area. The competitive area for this reduction in force is U.S. Army Medical Department Activity (MEDDAC)/U.S. Army Dental Activity (DENTAC)/U.S. Army Veterinary Command (VETCOM). Separate competitive areas are established for: U.S. Army Garrison/JRTC, installation-wide; this area includes all JRTC Garrison employees located at Fort Polk, and employees of commands not electing a separate competitive area; AMC, Logistics Support Activity, GS-09 and above; U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command; U.S. Army Test, Measurement, and Diagnostic Equipment Support Group; Department of the Army Career Interns; U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command; U.S. Army Combined Arms Command-Training; TRADOC/JRTC, Operations Group, and U.S. Army Garrison employees located at Camp Shelby, Mississippi.

b. **COMPETITIVE LEVEL:** Next, similar positions are grouped together into competitive levels for RIF competition. A competitive level consists of positions in the competitive area that are in the same grade (or occupational level), in the same classification series, and similar enough in duties, qualification requirements, pay schedules, and working conditions so that the incumbent of one position can successfully perform the critical elements of any other position in the same competitive level, without any loss of productivity beyond that normally expected in the orientation of any new but fully qualified employee. Positions with different types of work schedules are placed in different competitive levels. Positions of supervisors and management officials are placed in competitive levels comprised only of these type positions. Also, competitive and excepted service positions are placed in separate competitive levels with each RIF run separately.

c. **RETENTION STANDING:** The controlling elements are: the competitive area, the competitive level, and the retention register. Reduction in force is invoked in retention order beginning with the employee with the highest overall retention, regardless of grade level. When employees in the same retention subgroup have identical service dates, the employee with the highest current performance rating will be determined to have the highest retention standing. If current performance ratings are identical, then the employee with the most service in his/her current position without a break in service will be determined to have the highest retention standing.

d. **RETENTION REGISTERS:** Next, the four retention factors are applied to create a retention register. As earlier mentioned, they are tenure, veterans' preference, length of service, and performance. The

following four retention factors are applied and employees are listed on the retention register in the order of their retention standing as follows:

(1) TENURE GROUP. Employees are ranked in a retention register in three groups:

(a) GROUP I-Career Employees who are not serving probation.

(b) GROUP II-Career-Conditional employees and career employees serving a probationary period.

(c) GROUP III-Employees serving under term and similar non-status appointment.

NOTE: Temporary employees are non-competing employees for RIF purposes and may be separated with out RIF procedures

(2) VETERANS PREFERENCE. Each of tenure groups are divided into three subgroups reflecting the employees' entitlement to veterans' preference:

(a) SUBGROUP AD-Preference eligible veterans with a compensable service-connected disability of 30 percent or more.

(b) SUBGROUP A-Veterans not included in subgroup AD.

(c) SUBGROUP B-Non-Veterans. This group also includes retired members who do not meet the criteria for veterans' preference for RIF purposes.

NOTES: In order to receive veterans' preference, an honorable or general discharge is necessary. Guard or Reserve active duty for training purposes does NOT qualify for veterans' preference.

A **retired member** of the armed forces is considered to be a veteran for RIF purposes only if the veteran meets one of the following: (1) The armed forces retirement is based upon a disability that either resulted from injury or disease received in the line of duty as a direct result of armed conflict, or was caused by an instrumentality of war incurred in the line of duty during a period of war; (2) The armed forces retirement is not based upon 20 or more years of full-time active service; or (3) the employee has been continuously employed for the Government since November 30, 1964, without a break in service of more than 30 days. (If the veteran meets condition (3) but retired at the rank of major or higher (or equivalent), he or she must also meet the general definition of disabled veteran in Section

2108(2) of Title 5, United States Code, in order to be a veteran for RIF purposes

(3) LENGTH OF SERVICE. Within each tenure subgroup, employees are ranked for RIF retention by service dates. The service date includes creditable civilian and military service with additional service credit for certain performance ratings.

(4) PERFORMANCE. Employees in each subgroup are ranked ahead of those with less service and receive extra service credit for RIF based on the average of the last three ratings of record received during a four-year period. Employees receive extra credit only for ratings of Fully Successful or above. An employee's service computation date is adjusted for RIF purposes based on this average (rounded in the case of a fraction to the next higher whole number). The four-year period begins with the cutoff date established for receipt of performance appraisals in the CPAC and the cutoff date for this RIF was close of business 9 April 2001.

(a) If an employee received more than three annual ratings during the four-year period, the three most recent annual ratings of record are used.

(b) If an employee received less than three annual ratings during the four-year period, the values of the actual ratings given are added together and averaged.

(c) If an employee has no ratings of record, the employee will receive credit based on the performance rating most often given to employees in the competitive area. This is called a "modal rating."

(d) In determining this average, the value assigned to each annual performance rating of record is as follows:

(1) "Outstanding(O)" - Twenty (20) additional years of service;

(2) "Exceeds Fully Successful(EFS)" - Sixteen (16) additional years of service; and

(3) "Fully Successful(FS)" - Twelve (12) additional years of service.

EXAMPLES:

	SCD	RATINGS/ADDITIONAL CREDIT	RIF SCD
Bob - 1AD	09-01-68	O+O+EFS=20+20+16=56÷3=19	09-01-49
Sue - 1A	08-03-88	FS+FS=12+12=24÷2=12	08-03-76
Joy - 1B	04-04-79	O=20÷1=20 (modal)	04-04-59

e. **RELEASE:** Once all abolish actions are identified, the RIF process begins. Employees are released from the competitive level in the inverse order of their retention standing. IF an employee's job is abolished, and there are no vacant positions within the competitive level, and there is a lower standing employee on the retention register, the person whose job is abolished has the right to displace the employee at the bottom of the retention register. Within each subgroup, employees with less service are released before employee's with more service. The employee may be in another division, branch, or organization. This displacement is not considered a RIF action, but the subsequent action to place the employee who is "released" from the competitive level is a RIF action.

EXAMPLES:

Competitive Level: GS-201-11 (Bob's position abolished)

Bob 1AD 09-01-49

Sue 1A 08-03-76

Joy 1B 04-04-59

Tom 11B 12-14-81 - RELEASED

f. **ASSIGNMENT RIGHTS:** This is the right of a competitive service employee to be assigned (by bump or retreat) to a position in a different competitive level held by another employee with lower standing on a retention register. An employee has assignment rights to positions up to three grades, or three grade intervals, lower than the position from which they are released. An employee in retention subgroup AD has expanded retreat rights up to five grades or intervals lower than the position held. All employees identified to be released from their competitive level are placed in retention standing order. The employee who has the highest overall retention standing, regardless of grade level, is placed first, the employee with the next higher retention standing is placed next, etc. In the event two employees are identical in retention standing, a tiebreaker is used to determine which employee is affected. Employees are entitled to a position that requires no reduction, or the least possible reduction in representative rate, within the grade limits for RIF assignment. The first consideration is positions at the same grade, with vacancies being considered first, then bumping, and then retreating. The next grade considered is the next higher representative rate grade position, with vacancies at that grade being considered first, then bumping, then retreating, etc.

NOTE: Temporary employees have no assignment rights and do not compete in reduction-in-force. Mandatory separation is required for those temporary employees who occupy the same competitive level as competing

employees reached for release from that competitive level. Also, re-employed civil service annuitants do not compete in reduction in force and must be separated before competing employees are released from the competitive level. Employees on temporary assignment (e.g. promotion or detail) compete for retention in the competitive level of their permanent position.

(1) BUMPING. This is displacing an employee in a lower tenure group or lower subgroup within the released employee's own tenure group. Although the released employee must be qualified for the position, including any minimum education requirements, it may be to a position never held before. The bumping process works as follows:

- (a) Subgroup IAD: May bump IA, IB or anyone in Group II or III, but may not bump Another IAD.
- (b) Subgroup IA: May bump IB, or anyone in Group II or III, but may not bump another IA.
- (c) Subgroup IB: May Bump group II and III, but not another IB.
- (d) Subgroup IIAD: May bump IIA, IIB or another in Group III, but not another IIAD.
- (e) Subgroup IIA: May bump IIB or anyone in Group III, but not another IIA.
- (f) Subgroup IIB: May bump Group III, but not another IIB.
- (g) Subgroup III: Have no assignment rights.

(2) RETREATING. This means displacing an employee in the same tenure group and subgroup who has less service. The position into which the employee is retreating must also be the same position (or essentially identical position) previously held by the released employee in any Federal Agency. For example, a 1A employee might be able to retreat to the position of another 1A employee who has less service. Retreat is used when it enables assignment to a higher representative rate position than bumping provides. Placement by retreat is not allowed if an employee can bump another employee in a lower subgroup at the same grade.

(3) **VACANT POSITIONS.** In order to cause the least possible disruption, identified vacant positions within your competitive area will be used in RIF placements, if they fully satisfy or equal your assignment rights. An employee's right to a vacant position is the same as bump or retreat. Vacant positions below your assignment rights may also be used as Non-Rif offers to place you in lieu of RIF separation or other RIF actions. Placement through RIF procedures to vacant positions in other competitive areas at Fort Polk is not allowed.

g. **GRADES, GRADE-INTERVALS AND EQUIVALENTS:** The grade limits of an employee's assignment rights are determined by the grade progression of the position from which the employee is released. Some General Schedule jobs have 1-grade progression, e.g., GS-5-6-7-8; others have a 2-grade progression, e.g., GS-5-7-9-11. Fort Polk has established the normal line of progression for each occupational series and grade level for Federal Wage System positions. When two positions are in different pay schedules, representative rates are used to determine equivalent grade levels and the best offer. A representative rate is the fourth step of the grade for General Schedule positions and the second step of the grade for Federal Wage System positions. The highest grade permitted in the other pay schedule is the highest grade with a representative rate that does not exceed the employee's current representative rate. The lowest grade permitted in the other pay schedule is the lowest grade with a representative rate that is not less than the representative rate of the lowest grade to which the employee has bump or retreats rights.

h. **WAIVER OF QUALIFICATIONS:** Except when waiver of qualifications is invoked, employees must meet OPM qualification requirements, including physical qualifications, before assignment to a position. After assignment rights have been considered for all employees in retention order standing, waiver of qualifications may be considered to make an offer or improve an offer. A waiver will only be used for vacant positions and positive educational requirements may not be waived. In addition, a waiver will only be allowed when it has been determined that the employee has the capacity, adaptability, and special skills needed to satisfactorily perform the duties and responsibilities of the position. Technical subject matter experts will assist management in making this determination.

i. **PLACEMENT & TRANSITION ASSISTANCE:** The Department of Defense (DoD) has earned a well deserved reputation for making every effort to ensure continuing employment for employees affected by actions related to RIF. When RIF or other unavoidable actions become necessary, placement assistance programs are available through DoD and local

state agencies. An overview of these programs is provided as follows:

(1) DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PRIORITY PLACEMENT PROGRAM (PPP). DoD policy is to minimize the adverse effects on employees due to RIF and the primary tool used to implement this policy is the PPP. It is an automated referral program that consists of several subprograms and is highly successful in the placement within DoD of adversely affected employees. Eligible permanent career/career-conditional employees in the competitive service and permanent excepted service employees with or without personal competitive status may register in this program. Employees who receive a specific RIF notice of separation or demotion are eligible to register. Under certain conditions, early registration is allowed. Normally eligible employees remain registered until they are placed, decline a valid offer, are otherwise deleted, or until 12 months after the effective date of separation from the permanent position. Registration is mandatory for employees entitled to severance pay. Relocation expenses through PPP are borne by the government to the maximum extent authorized. Employees in receipt of a demotion RIF notice will remain in PPP until the effective date of position change, until placed, or decline a valid offer. If not placed through PPP prior to demotion, the registration is changed to the DoD Retained Grade Placement Program (Program "R").

(2) DoD RETAINED GRADE PLACEMENT PROGRAM (PROGRAM "R"). If you are an employee on a permanent competitive and/or excepted appointment and are serving under grade retention as a result of RIF or job reclassification, you are required to register in this program. Normally, the area of referral for the duration of the retained grade period must include all DoD installations in the commuting area. However, if you relocate to the current DoD activity at government expense, registration is restricted to the new installation for one year. If an offer is made through this program, you must accept the written offer or lose your retained grade entitlement.

(3) DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OUTPLACEMENT REFERRAL SYSTEM (DORS). DORS is an automated referral system established and operated through a cooperative effort between DoD and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The purpose of DORS is to provide maximum placement opportunity for current DoD personnel and their spouses through referral to other DoD activities, non-DoD Federal Agencies, state and local governments, and the private sector. Registration and placement through DORS is strictly voluntary and should not be confused with the Department's mandatory Priority Placement Program (PPP). It is not available for temporary or term Employees.

(4) INTERAGENCY CAREER TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PLAN (ICTAP). If you are a displaced career or career conditional employee or former

career or career-conditional employee, ICTAP provides you priority consideration and selection in other Federal agencies. To be eligible, you must, be separated or facing separation; have a fully successful or equivalent performance rating (current or last received); submit an application to the agency having the vacancy; and be well qualified for the vacant position. The vacancy must be in the same commuting area as the location where you were or are being separated. If you meet the eligibility requirements, the agency must select you before hiring outside the agency. The program requires publication of job information on all Federal vacancies for this purpose. Eligibility for ICTAP begins on the date your agency issues a specific RIF separation notice to you and ends one year from your separation date. The application you submit must comply with all job announcement instructions and a copy of your RIF separation notice must be attached.

(5) REEMPLOYMENT PRIORITY LIST (RPL).

(a) If you are an RPL registrant with career status, you are retained on the list for two years from the date of separation. If you have career-conditional status, you are retained on the list for one year. As long as you are on the RPL, you will be given priority consideration in filling vacancies that are no higher than the grade(s) which separated by RIF for which you qualify within the commuting area. You will be deleted from the list (1) upon your written request, (2) when you accept full-time non-temporary Federal employment, or (3) when you decline employment at a grade level equivalent to the one from which separated or scheduled to be separated. To be entered on the RPL, you must submit a current SF 171, an OF 612, or a resume to your Civilian Personnel Advisory Center within 30 calendar days of the RIF separation date. To be eligible to apply, you must meet all of the following conditions:

- (1) Be in the competitive service in tenure group I or II;
- (2) Have received a performance rating above unacceptable as the last annual performance rating of record.
- (3) Have received a specific RIF notice of separation of a Certification of Expected Separation
- (4) Have not declined an offer as defined under Subpart G, 5 CFR, Chapter 351.

(b) If you believe that your reemployment priority rights under this program have been violated, you may appeal to the MSPB.

(6) STATE OF LOUISIANA DISLOCATED WORKER UNITS. Title III of the Job Training Partnership Act makes State programs available to Federal employees adversely affected by reduction in force. If you are scheduled for RIF separation, the CPAC will forward your resume and refer you to a unit, but only with your written consent. Benefits available from the State of Louisiana Dislocated Worker Units include self-accessed and information core services, staff-assisted core services, intensive services, and training services. Currently, there are units located in Leesville, Oberlin, Oakdale and DeRidder.

k. **SEVERANCE PAY:** If you are an employee serving under a full-time or part-time regularly scheduled tour of duty, you may be entitled to severance pay if separation is involuntary and you have been on the rolls in the Federal Service for at least the previous 12 calendar months. This may include service in both non-temporary and temporary appointments, providing there was not a break in service of more than three calendar days between appointments. If you are eligible upon separation to an immediate annuity from a Federal civilian retirement system or uniformed services retirement system, you are ineligible for severance pay. If you have received a specific written notice of separation because of RIF, this is considered to be an involuntary separation. Severance pay fund (that is, the maximum amount of severance pay you may receive) is determined on the basis of the basic rate of pay at the time of separation and years of creditable civilian service (basic allowance). If you are over 40 years of age, an age adjustment allowance is also a part of the formula. The basic allowance is computed on the basis of one week's basic salary for each year of creditable service for service up to 10 years, and two week's basic salary for each year of service thereafter. The age adjustment allowance is computed on the basis of 10 percent of the basic allowance for each year over 40 years of age. Your RIF separation notice and Notification of Personnel Action (SF50B) will reflect the amount of severance pay entitlement.

l. **DISCONTINUED SERVICE RETIREMENT:** If your position is abolished and you meet the age and service requirements for discontinued service retirement, you will receive a notice of discontinued service retirement eligibility before RIF letters are issued. Additional criteria must be met if you retire after RIF notices are issued. If you meet the age and service requirements for discontinued service retirement and are scheduled for involuntary separation by RIF or decline an offer of continuing employment which will result in a reduction of 3 or more grades or pay levels, you may be entitled to an annuity under the discontinued service provisions of the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). The age and service requirements are:

(1) Attained the age of 50 and completed 20 years of creditable service, including 5 years of civilian service, OR

(2) Regardless of age, completed 25 years of creditable service, including 5 years civilian service, AND

In addition to the above, CSRS employees must have been employed under the retirement system for at least one year within the 2-year period immediately before separation. This provision does not apply to FERS employees.

m. COMPETITIVE service versus EXCEPTED service. Employees in the "excepted" service have no assignment rights to positions outside the excepted service competitive levels. The excepted service includes all positions in the executive branch of the Federal Government, which are specifically excepted from the competitive service by or pursuant to statute, by the President or by OPM.

5. We trust that the information provided in this bulletin will assist you in better understanding and dealing with your personal situation should you be affected by this unavoidable reduction in force. You should not consider any reduction in force action as a reflection upon your performance, conduct or value to Fort Polk.

//ORIGINAL SIGNED//

DONALD R. MALLETT

Director of Civilian Personnel

Advisory Center

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